



# The Absolutely Right Fit!

Bindu Gopal Rao speaks on the 'Size India' campaign which is gathering steam.



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The National Sizing Survey of India is arguably a big step forward for the Indian Apparel industry. The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), New Delhi, under the aegis of the Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, is undertaking an extensive research study to develop a comprehensive size chart for the 'ready to wear' industry based on these body measurements of the Indian population. This is a scientific exercise where anthropometric data will be collected from a sample population in the age group of 15 to 65 years to create a database of measurements that will culminate in a standardised size chart truly representative of the Indian population, which can be adopted by the entire apparel industry.

## WHAT'S YOUR SIZE?

The fundamental question that was asked before embarking upon the survey was, "How many times have you found your perfect size in a ready made dress?" Well, it is likely that if you ask yourself this question, the answer, more often than not, is never. This is why a project of this magnitude has taken seed and is now all set to embark on the task over a period of at least the next couple of years. With the e-commerce sector booming, Indians are

increasingly shopping online and this standard size can certainly augur well for the online market space. Likewise, a standard size as far as India is concerned is also required considering the huge market size. Children will not be a part of this extensive exercise.

## GLOBAL CONTEXT

Research studies on fit and human-body measurements conducted across the globe indicate that a large percentage of shoppers face difficulty in finding clothes that fit perfectly according to their body measurements. "The overarching reason is differences in anthropometric build of people in different geographical regions across the country. This has led countries to undertake national sizing surveys to create anthropometric database of measurements which is a true representation of the entire population, to cater to their respective retail industry. The size charts and insights generated through these surveys and corresponding analysis have helped the garment industry to provide well-fitting garments. These garments are designed as per the body structure of the native population," says a NIFT spokesperson. Till date, more than fourteen

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countries across the world have undertaken and successfully completed national sizing surveys like USA, Canada, Mexico, UK, France, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Netherlands, Thailand, Korea, China, Australia, etc. The projects have been undertaken as a collaborative effort in consortium mode by Governments, technology companies, academic institutions and the apparel industry. It entailed measuring of statistically relevant sample size, pan country using the human safe technology of 3D whole body scanner (which is a non-contact method of taking body measurements) and analysing the collected data to create size charts.

## INDIA MATTERS

India is also facing the same dilemma as Indian



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apparel industry and uses size charts which are largely tweaked versions of size charts of other countries and are created more out of the manufacturer's instinct and experience than proven scientific study resulting in fits which leave lot to be desired. For the longest time, India has used the US or the UK system of 'Small', 'Medium', 'Large', 'Extra Large.' The projected returns of a garment are in the range of 20 per cent to 40 per cent (and are increasing with the growth of e-commerce) and a major reason for these returns is poor garment fit.

Providing well-fitting garments in the absence of a standardised size chart is proving to be a big challenge for the domestic textile and apparel industry in India which is projected to reach USD 123 billion by 2021 and holds the fifth position in apparel exports. A NIFT spokesperson stated, "India is attempting to undertake its own anthropometric survey to take care of these disparities and inconsistencies in apparel sizing systems and provided fits. The proposed study aims at standardising the apparel size charts for the Indian apparel sector. Apart from apparel, the findings of the study will have ramifications across various sectors such as automotive, aerospace, fitness and sports, art, computer gaming, etc., where the insights from this data can produce ergonomically designed products which are well suited for the Indian population."

**PROJECT DETAILS**

The project approved by Government of India will entail measuring of 25,000 (twenty five thousand) male and female persons between the age group of 15 years and 65 years in six different cities located in six regions of India, namely, Kolkata (East), Mumbai (West), New Delhi (North), Hyderabad (South), Bengaluru (South), and Shillong (North-East), using 3D whole body scanners. Areas of large congregations like festival grounds in the adjoining rural areas will also be covered. Whole-body scanners capture highly accurate 3D body maps in less than 10 seconds in one posture. The computer automatically extracts hundreds of measurements from a scan while eliminating manual measurement and transcription errors. A body scan thus produced is in the form of

## FEATURE

a point cloud, from which measurements are extracted through computer programming. "The point cloud data thus created as a part of this project will be confidential and secure. The technology is quick, accurate and human safe and helps immensely reduce the time frame of the anthropometric surveys. The duration of the activity will be approximately two years from the date of commencement.

### THE ROLE OF NIFT

NIFT is the pioneering institute of Fashion education in the country and is a statutory institute under an Act of Parliament of India, under the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India. NIFT was established in 1986 in New Delhi. Today, it offers under-graduate, masters' and doctoral degrees in the fields of design, management and technology in the area of fashion and apparel, with 16 campuses - pan India. NIFT is the implementing agency for the National Sizing survey and will be putting to

work its centres across the country, including faculty and students from various campuses in the organisation of the survey and in the related research. The support of National and international experts with experience in sizing surveys is being taken. Senior faculty of NIFT from across the country, who have specialised in sizing studies have been brought together to undertake this project. NIFT will also be holding extensive consultations with the apparel industry to align sizing requirements with the final pan India size chart, and to avail of their support in the conduct of the survey. "The standardised size chart for Indian apparel will be of tremendous value to the consumer in providing better fits for the Indian consumer, both within the country and abroad. It will be a great boost to the industry through the reduction of returns, and increased customer satisfaction, drawing greater attention to Indian apparel and exports," concludes a NIFT spokesperson. So well, it's time for India to size up. ■

